



Well-being in Sport Action Plan For Northern Ireland 2019-2025

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WELLBEING IN SPORT ACTION PLAN 2019-2025

A COMMITMENT TO IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING
FOR PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SPORT IN NORTHERN IRELAND



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Sport Northern Ireland

A Statement of Commitment

Sport has a strong and positive role to play in supporting mental health and wellbeing for all. A holistic approach to mental health is critical to deliver real change and no one agency can deliver that alone. Sport Northern Ireland is resolute in its commitment to a collaborative mental health and wellbeing approach, which is why we are recruiting a Mental Health Coordinator to facilitate delivery of an action plan.

We are all effected by the unacceptably high levels of mental ill health in our communities. A mature society recognises that when one member is diminished, it affects us all; the taboo that still exists around poor mental ill health diminishes us further.

Sport Northern Ireland is driven to develop a sustainable culture in the sporting system that supports the whole athlete. We are committed to building cultural and wellbeing capacity with sports bodies. We will practice within sport what we promote externally, as we commit to the mental health and wellbeing of our staff. This is our commitment, which is most effective with the support of our partners whom we look forward to working with.

Public Health Agency

A Statement of Commitment

The Public Health Agency recognises that sport can play a key role in the health and wellbeing of our communities. Being active is good for both our physical and mental health, and being involved in team activities can create social bonds and friendships. Sport can also provide an opportunity for people to support each other and identify issues that may be affecting someone's wellbeing.

The Public Health Agency is committed to working with Sport NI and other partners to raise awareness and improve understanding of mental health through sport. We recognise that good progress has already been made in this area by a number of Governing Bodies of Sport including for example the GAA Ulster Council, Irish Football Association and Ulster Rugby, and we welcome the commitment behind this initiative as it will help embrace other sections of sport and physical activity.

Foreword

In January 2016, Sport Northern Ireland invited a number of key stakeholders to discuss mental health and wellbeing in sport across Northern Ireland. After a series of meetings and consultations with the sector it was agreed that a **Strategic Action Plan** should be developed to provide direction, focus efforts and create a framework for investment in mental health and wellbeing in sport. The meetings and consultations subsequently resulted in a **Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy Group** being formed to lead the development of this Plan.

As the independent Chairperson of the Strategy Group, and as someone with a background in sport and exercise psychology, I am acutely aware of the psychosocial, mental health and personal demands often required of those involved in sport, and the need to provide adequate support from grassroots upwards.

I am determined to see more mental health and wellbeing support for those engaged in sport, at both a grassroots and competitive level, and I know this determination is shared by my fellow Strategy Group members as well as those with whom we consulted when developing this Plan.

This Action Plan sets out a shared vision for how mental health awareness raising and support is crucial to the sustained development of those involved in sport. With the successful delivery of the actions contained within this Plan, together we can make a difference to the lives and shared experiences of those involved in sport in Northern Ireland.

I would like to thank everyone who participated in the consultation events and activities and a huge thanks to all members of the Strategy Group for their hard work, passion and commitment in progressing the Wellbeing in Sport Action Plan 2019-2025.

**Dr John Kremer, Chairperson
Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy Group**

Vision and purpose of the Action Plan

The Vision for Wellbeing in Sport:

That everyone involved in sport is aware of the importance of looking after their mental health, and that of others, leading to a healthier lifestyle and positive wellbeing.

We will deliver the Vision by:

Increasing awareness, understanding and knowledge of mental health and wellbeing in sport, working with partners in both mental health and sport sectors.

The purpose of the Action Plan is to:

- Give direction to the development of mental health and wellbeing awareness and knowledge in sport settings across Northern Ireland;
- Encourage strategic and joined-up working to have real impact;
- Establish what the sector will look like by 2025 and provide a set of actions to get us there; and
- Provide a framework for strategic investment in mental health and wellbeing in sport.

Did you know?

Mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”.

(World Health Organization; WHO, 2014)

Did you know?

A short 75-minute student athlete mental health awareness programme when delivered by experienced facilitators can increase knowledge of mental health, including knowledge of mental disorders.

(Breslin et al, 2017)

Policy context

Positive engagement with sport is associated with an array of physical, emotional and psychosocial health benefits. Furthermore, sport can provide an ideal context within which to locate interventions designed to enhance personal wellbeing and psychological health. However, emerging evidence suggests that competitive sport, by its nature, may also contribute to poor mental health and lead to specific stressors that adversely impact on athletes' psychological health.

Mental health promotion and awareness work at three levels:

- 1** Strengthening individuals
- 2** Strengthening communities
- 3** Reducing structural barriers to mental health awareness and support
(Adapted from National Mental Health Development Unit. (2010).

Positive mental health is a vital resource for long-term social and economic prosperity. Therefore, in addition to the human cost at personal and family level, mental illness presents a high cost to society. As around half of individual cases of mental ill health begin in adolescence and tend to persist into adulthood, the costs involved cumulate over many years.

The World Health Organisation (2011) estimates that millions of people across the world experience mental health problems, with one in four experiencing a mental illness at some point in their lives. In a post-conflict Northern Ireland with a population of 1.8 million people, suicide has been shown to be on the increase in recent years. Northern Ireland continues to have the highest rate of suicide in the UK, per head of population, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). In 2017, there were 305 registered deaths due to suicide (intentional self-harm and events of undetermined intent), a 3% increase on the previous year (298). Males accounted for over three quarters of all suicides (77%) - NISRA, Ninety Sixth Annual Report of Registrar General 2017.

Findings from Northern Ireland based population surveys have shown that there is a low level of understanding of mental health. Paradoxically individuals are more likely to offer help to someone who was experiencing a mental health problem, but not to seek mental health support themselves if required (Breslin and McCay, 2012). This unwillingness to seek help was attributed to stigma associated with being labelled as someone experiencing a mental health problem.

Reflecting the persistence of the social stigma associated with mental health and help seeking in sport (Breslin et al, 2018), this Action Plan proposes an aspirational long-term vision and a number of realistic outcomes that will contribute towards achieving that vision.

This Plan will be driven by outcome based accountability i.e. there will be a focus on improving outcomes that will contribute to helping the sporting community promote healthier lives. This will help to ensure that many participants experiencing poor mental health and wellbeing will be better off as a result.

Did you know?

Globally an estimated 350 million people are affected by depression, 60 million by bipolar affective disorder, and 21 million by schizophrenia / other psychoses.

(WHO, 2016a, 2016b)

“As a person who has experienced depression seeking help has really helped me, and I would encourage others to do so. It’s hard to reach out but you should do it, it benefited me. Playing football is one of the ways I coped.”

(Football Player, Derry)

Strategic context

Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation, 2009-2019 is a cross-departmental strategic commitment to sport and physical recreation, endorsed by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Assembly. The high level target for participation includes a focused target (PA7) - “By 2019, to deliver at least a 3% increase in adult participation rates in sport and physical recreation (based on 2011 baseline)”.

In March 2015, the Sport Matters Mid-Term Review highlighted that “Sport and physical recreation provides personal benefits such as better physical and mental health, high educational attainment, creating better employment opportunities and earning potential”. It also recognised that achieving these benefits requires a genuine partnership approach with elements of work being taken forward by those best placed to contribute together through the pooling of resources and expertise.

This Action Plan consolidates the views emerging from the successful implementation of Sport Matters. It is intended that this Action Plan will make a significant contribution towards achieving not only the ambitions of Sport Matters plus Active Living: No limits, but also its successor from 2020 onwards when Sport Matters will be replaced by a new Strategy for Physical Activity and Sport. It also has the potential to deliver against targets within a range of other cross- departmental outcome focused strategies including:

Department for Communities - Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019 which acknowledges the role of sport and exercise in helping to combat stress. The Strategy contains proposals for improving public health, including promoting positive mental health.

Department of Health - Protect Life 2: (Draft) A Strategy for Suicide Prevention in North of Ireland which is a draft new strategy and action plan to reduce the suicide rate in Northern Ireland with a particular focus on directing resources and efforts to the most deprived areas which experience health inequalities.

Department of Health - Making Life Better: A Whole System Strategic Framework for Public Health 2013-2023 which builds on the former public health strategy ‘Investing for Health’ and takes account of consultation feedback on the draft framework ‘Fit and Well - Changing Lives’, and a number of other key reports and evidence. Through strength of coordination and partnership, the framework will seek to create the conditions for individuals and communities to take control of their own lives, and move towards a vision

for Northern Ireland where all people are enabled and supported in achieving their full health and wellbeing potential.

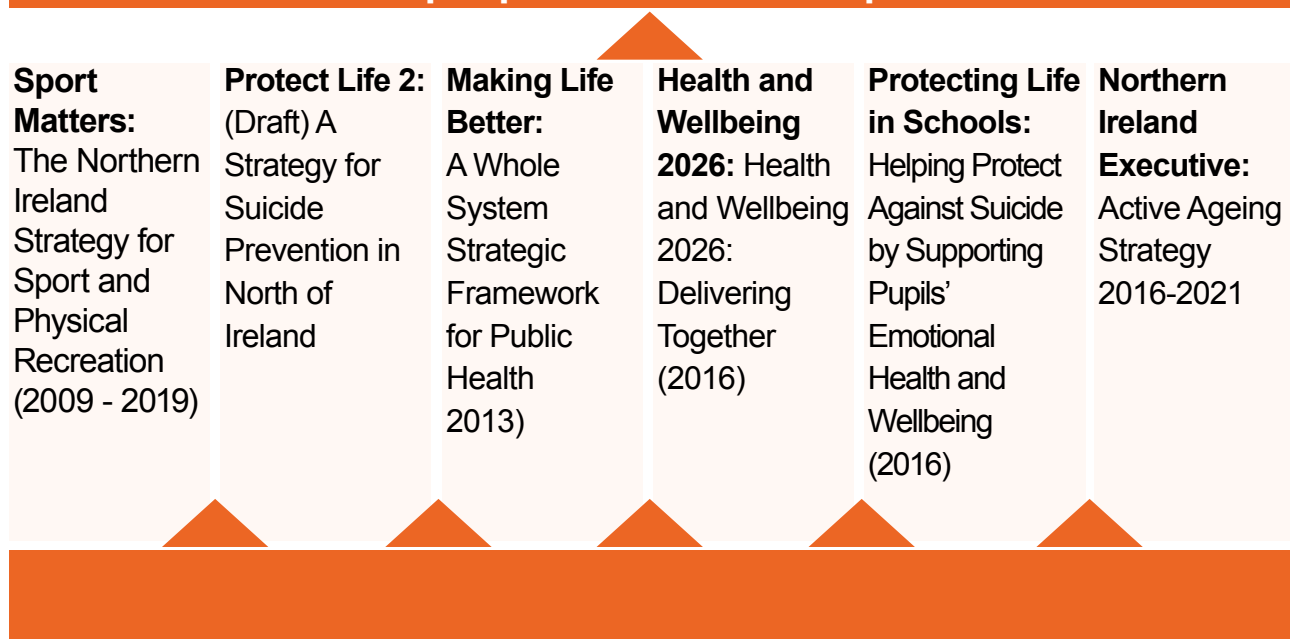
Department of Health - Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (2016) which is a 10-year approach to transforming health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

Department of Education - Protecting Life in Schools: Helping Protect Against Suicide by Supporting Pupils' Emotional Health and Wellbeing (2016) which seeks to provide support to schools on mental health and wellbeing and focuses on the many positive, supportive measures that schools can put in place to help safeguard the emotional health and wellbeing of their pupils. The programme is delivered under the branding of "iMatter". It is hoped that this advice will support schools in reducing the incidence of self-harm and suicide.

Northern Ireland Executive: Active Ageing Strategy 2016-2021 which focuses on what Departments can add to existing work to make a strategic change to services or programmes in relation to older people. One of the desired outcomes for the Active Ageing Strategy is that older people participate in physical activity.

This Action Plan will demonstrate how a range of organisations will work collaboratively to ensure that everyone involved in sport has been made aware of the importance of looking after their mental health and wellbeing, and encourage a strategic focus for investment in mental health and wellbeing going forward.

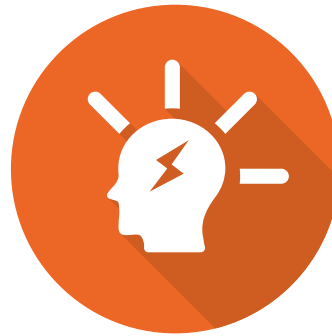
Improved outcomes and mental health and wellbeing for people involved with sport



Achieving outcomes



**1. ENGAGE, PROMOTE
AND SUPPORT**



**2. CAPACITY AND
CAPABILITY**



**3. IDENTIFY AND
INSPIRE**



**4. INVEST AND
IMPLEMENT**

Engage, Promote and Support

Outcome 1: Individuals and organisations within the sports sector are knowledgeable and confident in delivering their sport within a strong mental health and wellbeing culture.

Capacity and Capability

Outcome 2: There is a network of mental health and wellbeing officers, trainers and mentors available within and to the sport sector.

Identify and Inspire

Outcome 3: A mental wellbeing in sport ambassador scheme is in place to help address stigma associated with mental health, and communicate safe messages to inspire and encourage help seeking behaviours in the sporting community.

Invest and Implement

Outcome 4: Wellbeing in Sport partners recognise the importance of mental health and wellbeing in sport and invest resources of people, time and money to implement this plan.

How will we do this?

The proposed structure for action plan implementation is identified below:

A Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group that will agree a detailed Action Plan with clear outcomes and resources.

A Northern Ireland Wellbeing in Sport Forum to bring coherence, collaboration, networking and information sharing between relevant organisations within the health and sports sectors and showcase good practice of mental health in sport initiatives.

Sport Northern Ireland and key stakeholders have proposed the following outcomes for action:

- A Pilot Project to provide learning and insight
- Provision of training for sports clubs
- Development of resources to be used by sports clubs and National Governing Bodies of Sport
- Establishing a network of designated staff within sporting bodies to signpost and support those who require it
- Establish a network of Sports Ambassadors
- Monitoring the impact of the Action Plan

To realise the four outcomes, which will be employed as the primary measures of success of the Plan in 2025, **15 actions and 31 time bound delivery outputs** are set out under the four Action Themes in Tables 1 to 4.

“Our role would be to signpost people to avail of local services and support; there are many organisations best placed to support people.”
(Sports Club Chairperson, Belfast)

“As a representative of a large governing body of sport, I believe it is vitally important to get behind the Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Initiative.”
(Governing body of sport representative)

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1. Engage, Promote and Support

Table 1: Engage, Promote and Support

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Engage, Promote and Support	1. Establish structures and associated networks to effectively and efficiently implement, oversee, and review the Action Plan.	<p>b. Form a 'Northern Ireland Wellbeing in Sport Forum', with invitations extended to all those involved or interested in the area.</p> <p>a. Establish a Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group involving key funders.</p> <p>c. Develop a consultation / contact list including all key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Sport Northern Ireland</p> <p>- Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency</p> <p>- Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group</p>	<p>By March 2019</p> <p>By March 2019</p> <p>By March 2019</p>

Table 1: Engage, Promote and Support				
Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Engage, Promote and Support	2. Identify expertise and a training network within the sport sector, to ensure that best practice in mental health promotion in sport is recognised.	a. Coordinate engagement and partnership working between existing public / private / community / voluntary sector organisations and sports clubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wellbeing in Sport- Implementation Group- Sport Northern Ireland- Public Health Agency- Governing Bodies of Sport- Mental health services, charities and providers	By April 2019 and ongoing
	3. Assist National Governing Bodies of Sport to promote effective interventions at all levels.	a. Develop tools and resources where needed to help address stigma surrounding mental health in the sporting sector and encourage help-seeking behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Wellbeing in Sport- Implementation Group- Sport Northern Ireland- Governing Bodies of Sport- Northern Ireland Sports Forum	By March 2020

Table 1: Engage, Promote and Support

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Engage, Promote and Support	4. Promote the benefits of positive mental health for sport participation (and vice versa).	a. Develop a range of sport-specific materials (e.g. digital applications, website, information cards, etc.) to inform and educate those involved in sport i.e. Coaches, players, performers, parents, members, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency - Governing Bodies of Sport - Department for Communities 	By September 2019 and ongoing
		b. Use Sport Northern Ireland pilot scheme to consider effective delivery mechanisms.		
		c. Consider opportunities for promotion in other sport venues (e.g. gyms, leisure centres, etc.).		
			- Sport Northern Ireland	By December 2019
			- Sport Northern Ireland	By March 2020 and ongoing
			- Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group	

Table 1: Engage, Promote and Support				
Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Engage, Promote and Support	5. Input into local community sport initiatives (Governing Bodies of Sport and sports clubs) to continually promote positive mental health.	a. Engage and influence the action planning process ensuring positive mental health and wellbeing in sport is incorporated into actions from district council community plans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport Northern Ireland - Governing Bodies of Sport - Department for Communities - District Councils 	By March 2020 and ongoing

Table 1: Engage, Promote and Support

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Engage, Promote and Support	6. Build on existing networks and where required develop new ones to encourage integration of positive mental health and wellbeing into the sporting community.	a. Link and build on existing safeguarding measures currently in place.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport Northern Ireland - NSPCC - Child Protection in Sport Unit - Local Health Trusts 	By June 2019 and ongoing
		b. Raise awareness of local and regional support services used to signpost people should they be experiencing mental health problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - Public Health Agency - Sport Northern Ireland - Governing Bodies of Sport - Local HSCTs, local and regional support services 	By June 2019 and ongoing
		c. Promote the Public Health Agency's directory of services to signpost people to advice and help. E.g. PHA z-cards and mind your head website www.mindingyouhead.info	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Health Agency - Sport Northern Ireland 	Ongoing

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2. Capacity and Capability

Table 2: Capacity and Capability

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Capacity and Capability	7. Identify and support the delivery of age appropriate mental health awareness training with Governing Bodies of Sport and sport clubs.	a. Support the delivery of appropriate evidence based training for officers, members, coaches, volunteers, parents and participants.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency - Mental Health Charities	By March 2020 and ongoing
		b. Explore opportunities for including mental health awareness as an integral part of existing coach education programmes.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency - Governing Bodies of Sport - Sports clubs	By December 2019 and ongoing
		c. Develop a register of quality assured external trainers for sports to use.	- Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency	By December 2019
		d. Use PHA Training framework and Quality Service Standards to compile a directory of mental health in sport training programmes.	- Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency	By March 2019 and ongoing

Table 2: Capacity and Capability				
Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Capacity and Capability	8. Explore opportunities for using sport as an effective delivery medium to improve mental health and wellbeing among current non-participants.	a. Working with partner agencies outside sport (e.g. Health and Social Care Trusts) to identify opportunities for using sports' initiatives to target those with mental health issues who are not currently participating in sport. b. Develop and promote good practice case studies from within the sports sector.	- Department of Health - Sport Northern Ireland - Public Health Agency - Local Health Trusts - 11 District Councils - Education Authority - Governing Bodies of Sport - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group	By June 2019 and ongoing By June 2019 and ongoing
Capacity and Capability	9. Support the introduction of practical structures for promoting positive mental health within sports clubs.	a. Support the establishment of roles within Governing Bodies and Sport clubs with designated responsibility for mental health promotions, policy and training.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Sports Forum - Governing Bodies of Sport	By March 2020
Capacity and Capability	10. Building a capacity and clear understanding of responsibility for young people's mental health.	a. Commission independent research to evidence and demonstrate the requirement for building capacity.	- Sport Northern Ireland	By December 2019

Read about programmes and how the Action Plan has contributed to their enhancement and impact

CASE STUDY 1 - STATE OF MIND IRELAND

State of Mind Ireland is an evidenced-based mental health in sport awareness programme aimed at university student athletes. The 75-minute programme was delivered by Ulster University School of Sport in partnership with the UU Students Union and Student Support Services, and funded by the Public Health Agency.

The programme raised mental health awareness in student athletes. Students increased their knowledge of mental health and intentions to self-manage, as well as their wellbeing.

The Action Plan was useful by recognising the importance of promoting evidence-based mental health programmes within a university setting. The programme has been modified now to engage first year students who are non-athletes at Ulster University.



1. ENGAGE, PROMOTE
AND SUPPORT

CASE STUDY 2 - ACTION MENTAL HEALTH

Action Mental Health delivered Mindset training to Soccer NI.

Read about programmes and how the action plan has contributed to their enhancement

Street Soccer NI is a football project set up for the disadvantaged groups of society such as the homeless, people with addictions and/or mental health issues, refugees, asylum seekers, and long-term unemployed. Street Soccer NI aims to bring positive change to people's lives using football. The group received training from Action Mental Health over two weeks.

Feedback from the group was that they had learned "Not to bottle stress up, there is always help" and "It's ok to not be ok". All participants reported to feeling more confident about seeking support for themselves or others as well as having an improved knowledge and attitude towards mental health.



2. CAPACITY AND
CAPABILITY

The background of the slide is a vibrant, abstract composition. It features a dense field of small, multi-colored dots in shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and purple. These dots are scattered across the entire frame, with a higher concentration in the upper right quadrant. Overlaid on this dot pattern are several large, white, irregular circular shapes that resemble stylized clouds or bubbles. The overall effect is a dynamic and colorful visual texture.

3. Identify and Inspire

Table 3: Identify and Inspire

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Identify and Inspire	11. Work in partnership with Governing Bodies of Sport and sport clubs to recruit, train and support Mental Health and Wellbeing Officers.	<p>a. Draw up role descriptions and specifications for identified positions, including key skills and aptitudes.</p> <p>b. Ensure training needs are supported where necessary.</p> <p>c. Provide appropriate information or where necessary seek advice from services to ensure safe messaging on promoting positive mental health in sport.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - Governing Bodies of Sport - Sport Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Sports Forum - Public Health Agency - Public Health Agency - Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group 	<p>By September 2019 and ongoing</p> <p>By December 2019 and ongoing</p> <p>By June 2019 and ongoing</p>

Table 3: Identify and Inspire				
Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Identify and Inspire	12. Identify 'Mental Health Ambassadors' within the sports sector to share their story and inspire others to seek help (if required).	a. Work with Governing Bodies of Sport to select appropriate Mental Health Ambassadors.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Sports Forum - Governing Bodies of Sport	By June 2019 and ongoing
		b. Arrange regular meetings with Mental Health Ambassadors. Network, engage and support ambassadors to ensure safe, consistent messaging to assist and promote recovery.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Northern Ireland Sports Forum - Governing Bodies of Sport	By June 2019 and ongoing

Read about programmes and how the Action Plan has contributed to their enhancement and impact

CASE STUDY 3 - GAA MINDFIT

GAA MindFit is an hour-long session based on understanding how our thoughts, feelings, behaviours, and wellbeing can be affected when we face a setback in a sports setting; and how to build on our resilience to allow us to continue to enjoy our successes, the good things in life, deal with the difficult things as and when they happen, and build on our ability and capacity to bounce back (resilience).

Since February 2018 the programme has been delivered across all six counties in Northern Ireland to 420 young people, male and female, between the ages of 13 and 18. Feedback indicated that adults in attendance at the training sessions felt they benefited from the information and skills being taught.

The future goal will be to extend the delivery of MindFit to allow even more local clubs across Northern Ireland to benefit from the awareness created around maintaining positive mental health and building resilience.



3. IDENTIFY AND
INSPIRE

CASE STUDY 4 - SCHOOLS EDUCATIONAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK, ULSTER RUGBY

Ulster Rugby hosted a Cross-Community Health and Wellbeing Week, funded by the Public Health Agency, involving 447 pupils from 15 post-primary schools. The programme educated pupils on aspects of physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing by engaging in both practical and information-based workshops addressing three key themes; mental resilience and positive mindset, physical activity, and nutrition.

“Our involvement with the Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy Group over the past two years have made us increasingly aware of the potential benefit of delivering mental health awareness programmes to sporting organisations and has given us the incentive to begin developing and piloting such programmes.”



4. INVEST AND
IMPLEMENT

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4. Invest and Implement

Table 4: Invest and Implement

Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Invest and Implement	13. Establish potential sources of support for Governing Bodies of Sport and sports clubs to ensure the long-term viability of the work.	a. Identify opportunities for Governing Bodies of Sport and sports clubs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Public Health Agency - Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - National Lottery - Government Departments 	By December 2019 and ongoing
Invest and Implement	14. Support delivery of, monitor and evaluate current and future programmes to ensure outcomes are developed and measured and evidenced on a regular basis.	<p>a. Engage with National Governing Bodies of Sport and service providers working in mental health promotion in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>b. Update mental health and sport intervention literature and evidence on regular basis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Forum - Universities - Institute of Public Health 	<p>By September 2019 and ongoing</p> <p>Review Annually</p>

Table 4: Invest and Implement				
Action Theme	What will we do and why?	How will we do it?	Who will do it?	When will we do it?
Invest and Implement	15. Promote best practice and continue research across the Northern Ireland sports sector to strengthen regional knowledge and share experience.	a. Monitor mental health strategies and interventions across sport - regionally, nationally and internationally.	- Public Health Agency - Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation Group - Universities	By December 2019 and ongoing
		b. To measure the culture existing in sports around mental health and wellbeing.	- Sports Census	By September 2019 and ongoing
		c. Provide regular updates and summary of progress every six months to key stakeholders across the Northern Ireland sports sector, including good practice examples.	- Sport Northern Ireland - Wellbeing in Sport Implementation	Ongoing

How will we measure progress?

This Action Plan is about encouraging and facilitating a collaborative approach to increase awareness and understanding of mental health and wellbeing in sport. The result ('outcome') we are aiming for is articulated in the Vision:

“That everyone involved in sport is aware of the importance of looking after their mental health, and that of others, leading to a healthier lifestyle and positive wellbeing.”

There will be many challenges in the delivery of this Action Plan, as no one organisation can deliver this vision on its own'. The Action Plan requires joined up working from all agencies working with or with an interest in this area.

In a climate of constrained public sector investment, this Action Plan requires that all partners and stakeholders involved in its delivery make the best use of existing structures and resources. In that context, it is envisaged that the monitoring of this Action Plan's implementation should be aligned to existing frameworks such as Sport Matters: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Sport and Physical Recreation 2009-2019, and the Northern Ireland's Executive's draft Programme for Government. The Action Plan and the research that has informed its development will also serve to inform the next Strategy for Physical Activity and Sport (2020 - 2030) to ensure real impact for the sporting community.

**A barrier to mental health help-seeking in sport is stigma.
(Breslin et al 2019)**

The Action Plan has a proposed timeframe of six years in the first instance (2019 – 2025). As previously stated, no single individual or organisation has the capacity to meet the cost of its implementation. A truly collaborative investment model must be adopted where existing resources will be shared and thereby used more efficiently. It is likely that Executive Departments and Arms Length Bodies will bid for additional resources, as opportunities arise, and the Forum will actively explore and seek to secure support from alternative streams e.g. local authorities and Lottery monies.

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1

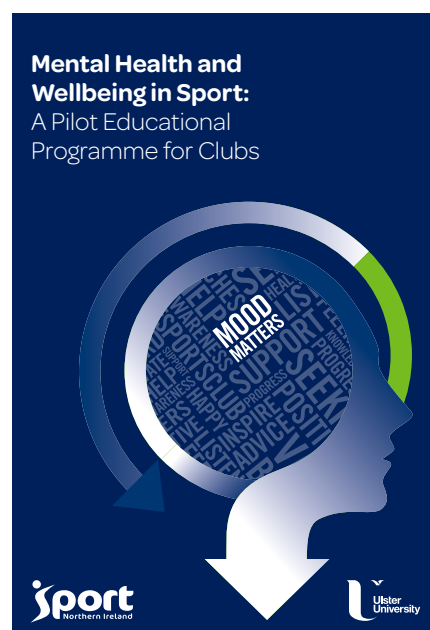
Background, where we are now, and why we need an Action Plan

Establishing the Evidence Base

Taking these competing messages into account, and building on earlier initiatives including ‘Mood Matters - Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport: A Pilot Educational Programme for Clubs’ (Breslin, et al, 2015,2017a), in recent years a cross-sectoral interagency Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy Group (hereafter referred to as the “Strategy Group”) has brought together a range of partners¹ in order to develop an Action Plan for the promotion of mental health and Wellbeing in sport in Northern Ireland.

The Strategy Group has already overseen several pieces of work designed to help inform this Action Plan. Recently, this included the publication of the research report, ‘Mental Health and Wellbeing Intervention in Sport: A Review and Recommendations’. The report was based on two thorough research projects. First, a global systematic review of interventions in sport that have promoted positive mental health and wellbeing; and second, a regional evaluation of existing local mental health awareness programmes (Breslin, et al, 2017b).

On completion of the report, a recommendation by the Strategy Group was to develop a detailed Action Plan in consultation with the sporting public across Northern Ireland.



¹ These include the Department for Communities, Sport Northern Ireland, Public Health Agency, governing bodies of sport, health professionals, university academics, community groups, representatives from psychology, psychiatry, sports clubs, and mental health charities.

APPENDIX 1 (CONTINUED)

Public Consultation and Recommendations

Six consultation events were held between 3 April -10 May 2017 across five venues in Northern Ireland. An open invitation to attend the consultation events was circulated via Sport Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Sports Forum, and coach and talent networks, and was also posted to the public on Eventbrite. A total of 90 people registered for the consultation events, with 83 attending (59% male, 41% female).

Attendees represented governing bodies of sport (15%), local clubs (37%), community groups, voluntary sector, charities, and individuals (18%) or other (30%). See Appendix 2 for further details relating to the public consultation that initially informed 10 recommendations for the Strategy Group to consider in the wider strategic and policy context of sport and mental health and wellbeing in Northern Ireland.

APPENDIX 2

Who developed this Action Plan, and what does the sporting community want?

This Action Plan has been primarily developed by key stakeholders who are committed to supporting and empowering people within the sports sector to have better awareness of mental health and wellbeing.

More than 250 individuals and organisations provided input during an engagement process that included the following: a survey (n=135); one to one interviews and focus groups (n=26); and public consultation events (n=83). Over 50 organisations with an interest and/ or remit for supporting mental health and wellbeing took part. These organisations included governing bodies of sport, the Public Health Agency, sports clubs, Female Sports Forum, mental health charities, university students and student support services, and District Councils (See Appendix 2 for further details of those involved in public consultation).

The process of enabling, collecting and managing these views was overseen by a Strategy Group, convened and facilitated by Sport Northern Ireland and independently chaired. The Strategy Group included representatives from across the health and sports sectors along with the Department for Communities, Ulster University and charities. Full details of the Strategy Group membership is included at Appendix 3.

Overwhelming support for the development of this Action Plan was witnessed during the public engagement and consultation. The passionate debate and ideas generated were crucial in steering the development of the plan.

During the consultation process, respondents were asked how can they be encouraged and facilitated to support the mental health and wellbeing of themselves and others. They were also asked what they would like to see changed or improved for the sports sector. There were a number of themes emerged in their responses, these included:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes;
- Resourcing the Strategy / Action Plan;
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer, and
- Strategy Development.

APPENDIX 2 (CONTINUED)

In order to have these themes become 'live' and meaningful the Strategy Group analysed the information from stakeholders and identified four **Action Themes**.



1. ENGAGE, PROMOTE AND SUPPORT



2. CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY



3. IDENTIFY AND INSPIRE



4. INVEST AND IMPLEMENT

Appendix 3 provides a bullet summary of consultation responses under each of the emerging themes.

APPENDIX 3

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy Group Membership

Dr John Kremer - Independent Chairperson
Dr Paul Donnelly - Sport Northern Ireland
Dr Gavin Breslin - Ulster University
Tandy Haughey - Ulster University
Fiona Teague - Public Health Agency
Helen Gibson - Public Health Agency
Robert Heyburn - Department for Communities
Tom McEnaney - Aware NI
Beth Gibb - Action Mental Health
Nuala Dalcz - Inspire (from 18-04-2018)
Joe Donnelly - Tackling Awareness Mental Health Issues (TAMHI)
Ciaran Kearney - Northern Ireland Sports Forum
Paul Stephenson - NSPCC - Child Protection in Sport Unit
Chris Shields - Ulster Rugby
Kerry Spence - Ulster Rugby
Keith Gibson - Irish Football Association
Maura McMenamin - Ulster Council Gaelic Athletic Association
Kate Hills - Swim Ireland
Dr Gary Woods - Consultant Psychiatrist
Angharad Bunt - Sport Northern Ireland
Nicola Algie - Sport Northern Ireland (from 22-02-2018)
Lisa Beattie - Sport Northern Ireland (from 18-11-2017)
Alan Curran - Sport Northern Ireland

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport: A Pilot Educational programme for Clubs

135 adults (coaches and volunteers) received programme:

- 23 sports / clubs
- 27 paid coaches, 41 volunteer coaches, and 59 involved in management or volunteer
- 109 adults (coaches and volunteers) control: 53 paid coaches, 48 volunteer coaches, and 8 involved in management or volunteering

Focus Group Responses

- 2 focus groups
- Individual volunteers, from basketball, football and hockey

Review - Interviews and Focus Groups

26 participants took part (20 male; 6 female) consisted of:

- 17 (14 face-to-face at House of Sport and 3 telephone)
- 2 focus groups
(1 House of Sport; 4 participants from NGB's, 1 Girdwood Community Hub;
5 participants from local football community)

Demographic information for responding organisations:

- Instonians Rugby Club (South)
- Knockbracken Golf Academy (South)
- Castlereagh Hills Golf Club (South)
- Colin Valley Golf Club (West)
- St Johns GAA (West)
- St Georges Boxing Clubs (City Centre)
- City of Belfast Boxing Club (East)
- Glentoran FC (East)
- North Down Boxing Club
- Cairn Lodge Boxing Club (North)
- Cliftonville Ladies FC (North)
- Ophir RFC, Newtownabbey
- Ballyearl Golf Club, Newtownabbey
- Monkstown Boxing Club
- Randalstown RFC
- Coleraine FC
- Strabane RFC
- Doire Trasna GAA, Derry

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

- Laganview Golf Club, Lisburn
- Newry Town RFC
- Warrenpoint FC
- Tir Na Nog GAA, Portadown
- Killeavy GAA
- St Patricks GAA, Omagh
- Ballinamallard FC

Organisations / stakeholders involved:

- Action Mental Health
- Athletics Northern Ireland
- Aware
- Cumann Spóirt an Phobail
- Department for Communities
- Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA)
- Irish Football Association (IFA)
- National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- Netball Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Sports Forum
- Old Boys Football Club
- PIPs Newry and Mourne
- Professional Golfers Association (PGA)
- Psychiatrist
- Public Health Agency (PHA)
- Sport and Exercise Psychology
- Sport Institute Northern Ireland (High Performance Sport)
- Sport Northern Ireland (Policy Development, Programme Delivery and Evaluation)
- St Malachy's Old Boys Youth Football Club
- St Patrick's Football Club
- Swim Ireland
- Tackling Awareness of Mental Health Issues (TAMHI's)
- Ulster Badminton
- Ulster Rugby
- Student Athletes

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

Public Consultations

Six public consultations were held:

- Five venues across Northern Ireland from 3rd April-10 May 2017

1. Girdwood Belfast
2. Foyle Arena Derry
3. Assembly Buildings Belfast
4. Craigavon Civic Centre
5. Ballymena Showgrounds

- 83 attendees (49 Male; 34 Female)
- 73 clubs /organisations /individuals represented

Organisations

- Crumlin Star
- Holy Family Boxing Club
- Street Soccer NI
- St Patricks Football Club
- S.A.M.H.I
- Albert Foundry Football Club
- PIPS
- St Malachys Old Boys
- 22nd Old Boys Football Club
- 22nd Ladies Football Club
- Sporting Belfast
- Cliftonville Ladies Football Club
- Maiden City Soccer
- ASPIRE programme
- Ulster Hockey
- Foyle Cycling Club
- Inspire Mental Health
- Derry City and Strabane District Council
- Ulster University
- Strabane Training Services
- Waterside Women's Centre
- Greater Shantallow Area Partnership
- The Clear Project
- Western Health and Social Care Trust
- Foyle Valley Athletics Club
- Eglinton Community Ltd

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

- City of Derry Spartans
- Triangle Judo Club
- YMCA / Derry Vipers American Football
- Derry Vipers American Football
- SDLP / DCSDC
- Springwell Running
- MH student Club - Ulster University
- Na Magha Hurling Club
- Nexus NI
- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- Ulster Tennis
- CI - Knock Bowling Club
- The Rainbow Project
- County Antrim Boxing
- Boys and Girls Club (NI)
- Dept of Agriculture, Environment
- Inland Fisheries
- Royal Yachting Association Northern Ireland (RYANI)
- Live Active NI
- Special Olympics
- Inspire
- Athletics NI
- South Belfast Area - Project Education Authority
- Canoe Association of NI
- Angel Eyes NI
- East Belfast Mission
- St Marys GAC
- Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council
- Live Active NI
- Irish Football Association (IFA)
- Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU)
- IRFU (Ulster Branch)
- Lurgan Tennis Club
- British Horse Society (Dressage Ireland)
- Health Promotion Department
- Education Welfare Officer
- WSK Judo Club
- Irish Athletic Boxing Association
- South Antrim Community Network (SACN)

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

- Coleraine RFCC
- Fresh Little Minds
- Mallusk Harriers
- East Antrim Rifle and Pistol Club
- Ballymena Runners
- Mid and East Antrim Borough Council

Note: The public consultations were facilitated by Dr Gavin Breslin, Tandy Haughey and Dr Paul Donnelly.

Summary of Consultation responses

Strategy Development

- The Strategy / Action Plan could link to other existing strategies - specifically district council community and other departmental plans.
- Language in the Strategy / Action Plan should be suitable for all within the community to understand.
- Development of a one-page action plan for governing bodies of sport and clubs.
- Integration into the current Clubmark / Kitemark Schemes in governing bodies of sport.
- Build on work currently underway on leadership and integrate wellbeing into this.
- Identification of role models to show mental health is important to everyone, this would tackle mental health stigma.
- In conjunction with other initiatives, to ensure the availability of a mental health and wellbeing trained workforce to educate those involved in sport.
- Production of a mental health and wellbeing toolkit relevant to the needs of those involved in sport.
- Identification of funding opportunities to assist communities to develop mental health in sport initiatives.
- Enabling sports clubs to act in a signposting role to professional support.

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

Resourcing the Strategy / Action Plan

- Maintain the Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport Strategy to provide overall leadership and governance.
- Train the existing paid and volunteer workforce in sport.
- Develop specific mental health in sport resources and toolkits, linking with agencies that are currently delivering mental health promotion.
- Examine potential funding opportunities for the strategy / action plan.
- Build partnerships - area alliances, learning networks and sports forums - develop community planning to share the costs of the strategy / action plan.
- Address the mental health and wellbeing training gap within current coaching qualifications.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes

- There was an overwhelming view that there is a requirement for mental health awareness programmes and advice required for participants, leaders, coaches, administrators, and volunteers.
- A standardised communication pack should be developed to support sporting organisations.
- A social media campaign that shows an awareness of the culture of sport should be launched to raise awareness of positive mental health and available interventions.

Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer

- Each sports club should appoint a Mental Health and Wellbeing Officer.
- It was felt that there should be a Regional Officer who was the overall contact person for each officer in the sports club when a mental health issue was to arise. This could be an integrated service linked to existing regional mental health training personnel.
- Accredited or certified training was suggested best for the Mental Health and Wellbeing officer, this was to ensure they had the correct skill set for the position.
- It was felt that if a governing body person takes on the role it should be a paid position.
- For the development of officers, a similar approach to that of the current Safeguarding Officer in the sports club could be considered.

APPENDIX 3 (CONTINUED)

Project initiation phase:

January 2016 - March 2016

- Strategy Group engagement
- Project planning and goal setting

Pre-consultation phase:

March 2016 - November 2017

- Desk-based research
- Evaluation of 'Mental Health and Wellbeing in Sport: A Pilot Educational Programme for Clubs'
- Mental Health and Wellbeing Intervention in Sport: A Review and Recommendation
- One-to-one stakeholder engagement

Public engagement and consultation phase:

April 2017 - May 2017

- Girdwood Community Centre, Belfast
- Foyle Arena, Derry/Londonderry
- Assembly Buildings, Belfast
- Craigavon Civic Centre, Craigavon
- Ballymena Showgrounds, Ballymena

Drafting phase:

September 2017 - May 2018

- Strategy Group analysis of public engagement and consultation information
- Strategy Group Action Plan and vision development

Approval and completion phase:

May - March 2019

- Final public consultation
- Action Plan revisions

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USEFUL CONTACTS

If you are or someone you know is in distress or despair, call **LIFELINE** on 0808 808 8000 or visit: **www.lifelinehelpline.info**

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for anyone struggling to cope. Call the free helpline on 116 123.

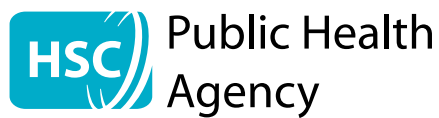
In crisis go to or contact the **Emergency Department** of your nearest general hospital if someone is in immediate danger. You can also contact the emergency services by calling 999 or 112.

Contact a **local GP** or **GP out of hours service**. A GP can give you advice and information on support available to you.

www.mindingyourhead.info has information on mental health and the supports and services in Northern Ireland.

www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/directory-services-help-improve-mental-health-and-emotional-wellbeing provides information on support available in each of the five Health and Social Care Trust areas.

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